

# Newark Nationality groups C

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2. The natural predilection for Chinese to be closed-mouth;
3. The sociological importance of the community is not great.

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## HISTORY

### Contribution of the Chinese Community

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Newark, N.J.

By

Frank Eng

Given at Panel  
Van Buren Branch  
Iron bound Comm  
Comm auspices  
Dec 11, 1961



## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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## HISTORY

Little research has been done in this area. It is known that Chinese have been in this country as early as the 1820's in California. Quite a few Chinese families in the far west can claim six generations as Americans. Here in the east, the Chinese came much later. The first recorded Chinese came to New York City in the 1840's and by the Civil War there was a thriving community where present N.Y.C. Chinatown is today. It is probable that some Chinese migrated to Newark. (My own grandparents on my father's side came to Newark from California in 1874. My great-grandfather came to California as a miner in 1850. Many Chinese were brought to this country to help in the western gold fields. Almost all were experienced, having worked in the Canton gold mines in China)



The Chinese Community in Newark can definitely be identified by the late 1880's. At that time, what is now, Columbia, Green, and Mulberry Streets formed the nucleus of Chinatown. Restaurants and small shops were the main form of business. This community grew in size and reached its zenith in the early 1920's when the Census listed a population of 2000 Chinese in Newark, the third largest such community in the United States. It was during the Twenties that the so-called "tong" wars occurred. Tongs are fraternal organizations and in their present day form are equivalent to the Elks. However, in the twenties, they may suitably be compared to the Mafia of today (though to be sure not nearly as extensive).

With the oncoming of the depression, Chinatown decreased in size. World War II made further inroads by increasing the types of work available to Chinese, thus starting a decentralization still in progress today.

Today, Chinatown no longer exists except for a few restaurants. And even here, quite a few of the owners and employees commute from the outer sections of the city or the suburbs. With the automobile, most Chinese have skipped Newark as a center for cultural life in preference for New York City. At this writing there are probably no more than 250 Chinese in Newark. (Decentralization has accelerated in recent years with the Chinese restaurants following their market to the suburbs.)



## CONTRIBUTIONS

Here, the area of discussion becomes extremely qualitative. The Chinese have strong family relations. There is hardly any parallel for it the western world. A child is made aware of his relation to his parents, cousins, clan, and ancestors. It is not unusual for Chinese families to trace themselves with historical accuracy back some 600 to 800 years. Quite a few can go as far as 2200 years with complete accuracy. The result of all this is are the strong obligations placed upon the children. This along with strong parental guidance has resulted in almost no juvenile delinquency through Chinese-Americans were long denied the economic opportunities available to other minorities.

The Chinese have always respected education. Even the illiterate Chinese held the scholar in highest esteem. Chinese parents as a result have strongly encouraged their children to higher education. The 1950 Census indicates that the general level of education for Chinese-Americans is one of the highest in the country. It is estimated that the faculty of the University of California is 10% Chinese-American, though the Chinese community in the San Francisco area composes less than 2% of the Population.



Of the Chinese in Newark, only one has gained any prominence in public life. He is Mr. Raymond King, now of Matawan. Mr. King was elected mayor of Hillside about ten years ago. Mr. King is only one-half Chinese; his father being Chinese, his mother Scotch-Irish.

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#### ECONOMIC LIFE

Chinese tend to own their own businesses as the result of economic discrimination and their own natures. The primary businesses in the east are restaurants, laundrys, wholesale produce, and importing. In the west, Chinese are in the above as well as real estate, stocks, manufacturing, food markets (75% of Arizona's food markets are owned by Chinese.)

Those who have attained a college education have gone strongly into the sciences and engineering since these fields offered the least discrimination. Medicine and dentistry also became preferred professions. Few Chinese have gone into teaching at the public school level, though many have entered high education.

Politically, the Chinese as a whole are Republican. This is unusual for a minority group but when the economic life is considered and the fact that the Republican Party has been more sympathetic to China's plight (especially in its support of the China Lobby during the 1950's), it is not strange after all.



## SUMMARY

This report has not especially centered on Newark's Chinese community mainly because the Chinese are so few in this country (250,000) and to limit a discussion to Newark would be too narrow,

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As with other minorities, the Chinese-Americans are becoming more assimilated into American life though full assimilation may never occur due to:

1. Racial differences;
2. Strong cultural ties.

The latter probably being the stronger. Fifth and sixth generation Chinese on the west coast still speak Chinese and in many cases read and write it. Yet, a curious amalgam of Sino-American culture exists for most Chinese-Americans today, possibly this is meant to be the American way.